

WHY PARENTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN SHOULD BE ON THE SCHOOL BOARD

BY N. D. COCHRAN

My friend John Tansey, editor of the Chicago Bulletin, takes issue with a statement I made to the effect that members of the school board should be parents whose children were being educated in the public schools. He says:

"I may use the public baths if I feel so disposed, but if I don't care to patronize them it doesn't mean that I am going dirty or lacking patriotism. Shall I be refused a seat in the city council for that reason?"

* * * The public schools of Chicago and the United States are the greatest public schools in the world. We couldn't get along without them. But attendance is not a certificate of citizenship for parents of the pupils.

* * * I am of the opinion that most of the criticism against private and parochial schools is not an honest criticism, but prompted by religious intolerance and bigotry, and generally echoed by dyspeptic-looking parents that live in childless homes."

I do not make the attendance of their children at the public schools a test of citizenship of the parents. Or a test of patriotism, either. I merely hold that a parent whose children attend the public schools will naturally be more interested in those schools than one whose children attend other schools—it makes no difference whether they be private or parochial schools. If I were mayor I wouldn't put a parent on the school board whose children were educated at home by private tutors.

As a taxpayer one citizen has as much right to hold office on the school board as another. The Catholic or Lutheran parent, who for reasons entirely satisfactory to himself, sends his children to the parochial schools managed by his church, is wholly within his rights as a citizen. But he is naturally most interested

in the school his children attend, even though not hostile to others.

It is easily possible to find among the parents whose children attend the public schools men and women who are capable of handling the business and financial end of the job as well as the educational—but all taxpayers ought to be well protected by school board members who are keenly interested in the public schools because their children attend them. It isn't a question of citizenship or of patriotism—it is a question of policy.

A man whose children don't attend the public schools might be as patriotic as one whose children do attend. In fact, he might be quicker to enlist, to shoulder a gun and fight for his country. It all depends upon the man—not upon his creed.

Undoubtedly there have been excellent members of the school board whose children were educated elsewhere, but it was always possible to find others at least equally as excellent whose children did attend the public schools. And, when that is true, it is better for all concerned to prefer those whose interest in the public school system is direct, personal and intimate.

So far as I know, M. J. Collins has been a good member of the school board. I don't know him. But I do know this—that politicians made political use, in the last mayoralty campaign, of the fact that Mr. Collins' children were not educated in the public schools.

I happen to be one Protestant who doesn't believe all he reads in The Menace, and who also believes that the Catholic hierarchy couldn't induce the Catholic laity to destroy our public schools even if it wanted to. And I believe that if the school board were made up of parents whose children attended the public schools